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# Comparative perspectives on family policy for equality

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21 June 2013



EQUALITY • SOCIAL ORGANIZATION • PERFORMANCE

# ESOP

# Introduction

- ▶ Family policies and public services reinforce and are reinforced by the system.
- ▶ De-familialization and more equal familialization.
- ▶ Strong focus on individual rights.
- ▶ Gender equality is an important complement in the Scandinavian model.

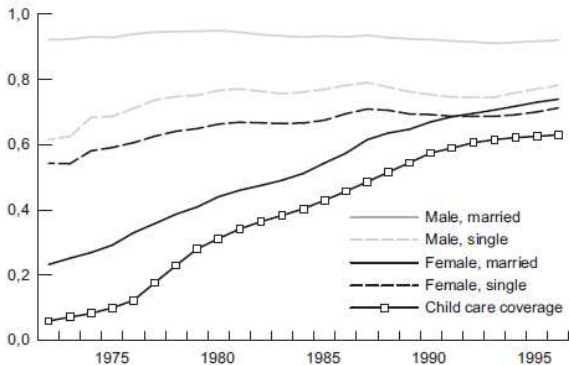
# Outline

Public childcare

Parental leave

Public eldercare

# Public childcare in Norway



# Political objectives and expected results

- ▶ 3 different political goals:
  1. Increase female labor force participation.
  2. Increase childrens' equality of opportunity.
  3. Increase childrens' human capital.

# Results

- ▶ Havnes and Mogstad (2011b) find no causal effect of subsidized child care on maternal employment.
- ▶ But note that women were already working and had informal childcare arrangements.
- ▶ Havnes and Mogstad (2011a, 2012) find that subsidized child care had strong positive effects on children's educational attainment and labor market participation, and also reduced welfare dependency.
- ▶ Girls and children with low educated mothers benefit the most.

# Parental leave

## Milestones in Norway:

- ▶ A 6-week paid maternity leave was introduced as far back as in 1909.
- ▶ In 1956 a 12-week paid maternity leave became available to all working women (via sickness insurance).
- ▶ In 1977, fathers gained the right to use parental leave.
- ▶ To increase fathers' take-up rates, Norway was the first country in the world to introduce a “daddy quota” on April 1, 1993.

# Political objectives and expected results

3 different political goals of the daddy quota:

1. Increase gender equality at the workplace.
2. Increase gender equality at home.
3. Change attitudes in society.



# Results

- ▶ Cools et al. (2013) find no positive effects on mothers' earnings, if anything, the opposite is found.
- ▶ No one has yet tackled the issue of statistical discrimination in a convincing way.
- ▶ Kotsadam and Finseraas (2012) find that paternity leave leads to more equal sharing of household work.
- ▶ Also among the children born around the reform when they are 17 years old (Kotsadam and Finseraas 2013).

# Public Eldercare

- ▶ The Nordic system of eldercare is the most extensive in terms of services provided.
- ▶ The key elements of this system are universal citizens' rights, extensive public eldercare, and the abolishment of children's legal obligation to care for their parents.
- ▶ Public eldercare is assigned according to need and financed mainly through general taxation.
- ▶ This is in sharp contrast to the means tested (UK and US) and family care (Southern Europe) models.

# Political objectives and expected results

- ▶ Not as strong (transformative) political agenda.
- ▶ Main goals are more narrowly defined and regard the utility of the elderly persons.
- ▶ Nonetheless, it has wider social ramifications.
- ▶ I here focus on female employment.

# Results

- ▶ Kotsadam (2011) finds women's employment to be negatively associated with informal caregiving to the elderly across Europe.
- ▶ The effects of informal caregiving are more negative in Southern Europe, less negative in Nordic countries, and in between these extremes in Central Europe.
- ▶ Similarly, Kotsadam (2012) finds that being an informal caregiver in Norway entails substantially less costs in terms of forgone formal employment opportunities than in non-Nordic welfare states.

# Interpretation

- ▶ Since eldercare is a choice in countries with more formal care and less pronounced gendered care norms, the weaker impact of eldercare on women's employment in these countries has to do with the lesser degree of coercion in the caring decision.
- ▶ Reciprocity may be enhanced and relations may form on love and affection instead of guilt and responsibility.
- ▶ Instead of obligations being determined by with whom you *are* family you can choose with whom *to do* family things.

# Some selected references (1)

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Havnes T., and M. Mogstad. "Is universal child care leveling the playing field?". 2012.

## Some selected references (2)

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